

on the amendment by Senator Withem? Senator Withem, do you wish to close?

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, I would. I would like to respond to a couple of things that Senator Crosby mentioned. I know there may be some people in here tempted to do what she said. That won't work. We're really not at a position where we can just leave things as they are. You're either going to have to go out and raise teachers' certification fees more to give them more money or cut the amount of money that they're authorized to spend because we don't have...right now, today, we have two bills that are in conflict with one another. We made the decision the other day that we did not wish to raise the...the certification fees an extra \$10 that had been requested because we think that the workload of the Professional Practices Commission does not justify it. To make the thing cash flow, you have to decrease the amount of money that they are authorized to spend. They cannot continue on at their current level of spending because they won't have the income to do that. So you don't have the luxury to just cast, as a body, I mean, I have no problem with Senator Crosby doing that but, as a body, you do not have that luxury of casting a symbolic red vote and having this amendment not pass unless you're willing to come back in again and look the teachers in the eye and say, yes, you have to spend more of your money to fund this commission. Secondly, I have absolutely no intent of getting...doing away with the Professional Practices Commission. The Professional Practices Commission is needed, it's important. It performs a vital function within the area of education. The question, the policy question we need to ask is, will the same structure of the Professional Practices Commission need to continue to be operated because, in the past, Professional Practices Commission, anytime anybody had a problem with a teacher they filed a complaint with the PPC. The PPC would investigate it. They would then, if it needed to go further, they would then become the prosecutor at the hearing. They don't do that anymore. Those functions have been...have been put over into the Department of Education. Yeah, I think everybody agrees that we need a system to determine whether or not we have people out in the field that are not competent teachers, not ethical enough, not moral enough to be dealing with our young people, we need a system. But maybe it doesn't need to be the current system with the level of staff that they have there at this time. Maybe there are other systems to do it. Maybe we can contract for these hearings, like we do in some other agencies.